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Letter dated 15 May 2003 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), established by the Security Council in its resolution 1279 (1999) of 30 November 1999.

The Security Council has been kept regularly informed through the briefings by the Secretariat of the recent dramatic developments in the Ituri region, particularly in Bunia, where MONUC has deployed a 700-strong guard contingent from Uruguay in support of the ongoing Ituri Pacification Commission process.

I am deeply concerned about the rapidly deteriorating situation in and around Bunia, which has become the stage of major violent clashes between Hema- and Lendu-based militia groups, and which has been exacerbated by outside interference. In view of the likely further worsening of the situation and its serious humanitarian consequences, I should like to request that the Security Council urgently consider my proposal for the rapid deployment to Bunia of a highly trained and well-equipped multinational force, under the lead of a Member State, to provide security at the airport as well as to other vital installations in the town and to protect the civilian population. The force would be deployed for a limited period until a considerably reinforced United Nations presence could be deployed. Clearly, such a multinational force should be authorized by the Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. All parties, in particular the Member States involved in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, should desist from any interference in the affairs of the region and fully cooperate in the efforts, including those of the multinational force, aimed at stabilizing the situation in Bunia.

In the face of the current crisis in Ituri, which affects the future of the peace process of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and thus threatens international peace and security, the international community must act decisively. Combined efforts by all concerned could offset the looming humanitarian catastrophe in Bunia and rescue the nascent political process, which offers a real chance for peace and reconciliation in this long-suffering region.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**

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